

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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HA-05 /115 W

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R 261300Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0386
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0124

E.O. 11652: GDS
T*GS: PDIP, FR, DM
SUBJ: BENIN-FRANCE: RELATIONS COOL

REF: A. COTONOU 0015, B. COTONOU 0033

1. RELATIONS BETWEEN BENIN AND FRANCE REMAIN COOL FOLLOWING
RECALL OF FRENCH AMBASSADOR AT BENIN'S REQUEST (REF A). IN
FOLLOW-UP ACTION FRENCH GOVERNMENT ALSO RECALLED HEAD OF
FRENCH AID MISSION TO PARIS JAN 15 FOR "CONSULTATIONS". AID
CHIEF PACKED UP HIS PERSONAL EFFECTS IN CASE HE DOES NOT RETURN.

2. MEANWHILE, GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB)
CONTINUES TO HARRASS FRENCH EMBASSY AND FRENCH NATIONALS IN
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BENIN. FRENCH DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL TEXTILE FIRM SOBETEX WAS
EXPELLED ON 48-HOURS NOTICE WEEKEND OF JANUARY 14 ON ORDERS
FROM INDUSTRY MINISTER OHOUENS FOR FAILURE TO TURN BLIND
EYE TO IRREGULARITIES IN OPERATING PROCEDURES. DIRECTOR'S
WIFE WHO PLEADED WITH BENINESE AUTHORITIES TO STAY ON UNTIL
HER TWO HANDICAPPED CHILDREN COULD FINISH SCHOOL HERE, WAS
DENIED PERMISSION AND IS EXPECTED TO BE FORCED OUT OF THE

COUNTRY SHORTLY. IN PAST WEEK SEVEN FRENCH NATIONALS WERE ARRESTED AND HELD FOR VARYING PERIODS OF TIME. THREE OF THESE WERE TECHNICIANS VISITING BENIN TO ASSIST WITH PROBLEMS AT THE NATIONAL BREWERY. REMAINING FOUR WERE TOURISTS. BENINESE AUTHORITIES ARE KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON FRENCH EMBASSY AND PREVENTING ANY BENINESE CITIZENS, INCLUDING LOCAL MERCHANTS AND CONTRACTORS, FROM ENTERING EMBASSY COMPOUND WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM INTERIOR MINISTRY. WHILE BENIN'S AMBASSADOR TO PARIS HAS NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY RECALLED, WE UNDERSTAND HE MAY REMAIN IN COTONOU FOR AN UNSPECIFIED PERIOD OF TIME FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FOR THE JANUARY 9-16 ANTI-MERCENARY CONFERENCE.

3. COMMENT: GPRB APPARENTLY IS COUNTING ON FRENCH ELECTIONS TO BRING TO POWER SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT MORE SENSITIVE TO BENINESE CONCERNS THAT WHAT PRESIDENT KEREKOU CALLS "LA FRANCE GISCARDIENNE." IF THE FRENCH ELECTIONS DO NOT PRODUCE THE DESIRED RESULT, WE CAN EXPECT GPRB TO DO SOME RAPID FENCE MENDING, PROBABABLY BY FINDING OTHER AD HOMINEM ARGUMENTS FOR HAVING SOUGHT AMBASSADOR MEADMORE'S RECALL. THOMPSON

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